



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF AIR FORCE

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CHIEF OF AIR FORCE INTENT FOR LEARNING IN A FIFTH GENERATION AIR FORCE

INTRODUCTION

1. In my 'Commander's Intent' I outlined my priorities for Air Force as we strive to transform to a truly joint force able to fight and win in the information age. While achieving these priorities will require a capable and professional workforce that can only be realised through effective learning¹, two of my six priorities are specifically related to learning as follows:

'Ensure our people have both the required technical mastery to support and operate our advanced air power systems and professional mastery to ensure that our systems are utilised to best joint effect'; and

'Fully understand, and be able to cogently explain, as an organisation and individuals, air power and its vital role in national security and the joint team'.

2. Learning underpins Air Force professional mastery, which comprises combat (or air power), technical and social mastery.² Learning for professional mastery is a career-long endeavour of professional development, which means acquiring or developing the skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, values and capabilities that are required of the military profession.

3. Achieving professional mastery through learning will be critical for our transformation to a genuinely fifth generation Air Force because advanced technology will get us only so far. We have successfully introduced modern, technologically advanced air power systems in the past five years and will complete our modernisation journey over the next decade. However, without a skilled and innovative workforce, these modern systems will not realise their potential. Accordingly, in addition to attracting and retaining high-quality personnel, we must develop them as masters of their profession.

4. There is a need for all members to have an *appropriate mix* of combat, technical and social mastery. The balance between these elements of professional mastery will vary according to a member's experience and role in the organisation. Junior Air Force members will usually be required to focus on achieving a high level of technical mastery and adequate levels of combat and social mastery. Conversely, those in supervisory and leadership roles will be required to demonstrate higher levels of combat and social mastery. Regardless of the requirement to emphasise any particular area(s) of professional mastery, there will be a need for ongoing learning.

5. Learning develops innovative and agile thinking by exposing us to different ideas, perspectives and methods that challenge us to analyse and evaluate our effectiveness and improve as a result. Learning can be achieved through a range of formal and informal means,

¹ Learning comprises both education and training.

² RAAF 2013, *Royal Australian Air Force Leadership Companion*, Centre of Defence Leadership and Ethics, Canberra, pp 24-8.

including education, training, self-directed study, experience and mentoring. While formal courses and qualifications are important, they are not the only means of acquiring and improving the skills and knowledge necessary for us to be effective air power practitioners and advocates.

6. This Intent outlines my expectations of how Air Force, both as an organisation and as individual members, will approach learning. I place a high value on learning and its importance to transforming Air Force.

INTENTIONS FOR AIR FORCE LEARNING

INTENTION ONE

Promote a Culture of Learning

7. Education extends the critical thinking abilities of individuals and provides us with a contextual basis for good decision making and innovative thinking beyond that provided through personal experience alone. These skills benefit both the individual and Air Force. Commanders must acknowledge the efforts of personnel who improve themselves through study and make use of members' new knowledge and skills whenever possible.

8. Air Force's personnel management system will acknowledge the value to the organisation of well trained and educated personnel by using the achievement of relevant learning as a discriminator in a member's posting and promotion determinations. Relevant learning is any learning that could reasonably be expected to improve a member's ability to fulfil their current, or a potential future, role in Air Force or Defence more broadly. This definition provides personnel managers and mustering and specialisation sponsors the latitude necessary to provide more specific guidance in order to meet organisational requirements.

9. Given the importance of learning to Air Force, the non-completion of *mandatory* Professional Military Education and Training (PMET) requirements in the absence of extenuating circumstances will be regarded as indicative of a lack of commitment and professionalism. This will have negative implications for a member's career progression and employment. Conversely, voluntary learning will be well regarded, noting that this can be achieved in a variety of ways such as CAMPUS courses, tertiary study and short-term industry placements.

10. I expect all commanders, supervisors, career managers and employment group sponsors to encourage and facilitate both mandatory and voluntary learning. In particular, every reasonable effort must be made to enable members to undertake mandatory education and training in a timely manner. While there are sometimes genuinely unavoidable reasons for not releasing a member for mandated training courses, commanders will be required to justify such decisions.

11. In addition to releasing members for mandatory residential courses, I expect commanders to provide flexibility where possible for members to undertake learning activities during working hours. However, as normal work commitments will take priority, members must plan on pursuing most of their professional development outside normal working hours.

12. As drawing on the ideas and efforts of only part of our workforce will limit Air Force's capability, we must ensure our approach to learning supports a culture of inclusion. All Air Force members are expected to contribute to the best of their ability and the organisation will seek and value this contribution. In particular, our training courses and the environments in which they are delivered are to promote and facilitate the inclusion of all

members. This will require more than a ‘one-off’ diversity presentation and will instead depend on the consistent words and actions of staff and students both inside the classroom and beyond.

INTENTION TWO

Develop an Integrated Air Force Learning System

13. Currently, the development, management and implementation of Air Force learning policy is often unclear and dispersed across disparate areas that are not always aligned with each other or with Air Force’s strategic intent. Accordingly, Commander Air Force Training Group is leading Plan Jericho Project 16, *Modernise Air Force’s Education and Training System*, to develop a coherent and integrated learning system that meets Air Force’s strategic requirements and clearly articulates and assigns learning responsibilities.

14. Air Force’s new learning system will be integrated with our personnel management system in order to deliver the skills, qualifications and experience necessary to meet the requirements of the contemporary workforce. This will include the better matching of people to positions and a coordinated approach to workforce management and training delivery. More generally, the new learning system will enable clearer direction on all learning-related issues, better use of resources and closer alignment with the other Services and the One Defence model.

INTENTION THREE

Staff Education and Training Units with Quality People

15. In line with the value that Air Force will place on learning, we will staff our education and training organisations with credible and capable personnel. Although we must carefully apportion our top performing personnel across Air Force, we cannot afford to regard our training organisations as ‘second tier’; they too must receive their fair share of high performers. Instructors are not just subject matter experts; they are also leaders, mentors, coaches and facilitators. They play a critical role in developing Air Force’s future workforce and so must have the right aptitude and ability for the role. In recognition of the instructional role’s importance, the successful completion of a posting to an educational or training organisation will be regarded as a positive discriminator during posting and promotion deliberations.

INTENTION FOUR

Adopt a Contemporary Approach to Learning

16. We must adopt appropriately modern and innovative ways of learning in order to achieve the best possible capability outcomes for Air Force from our available financial and personnel resources. This will include making the best use of modern training systems such as those being pursued under Plan Jericho Project 10, *Enhance Air Force’s Live, Virtual and Constructive and Ranges Capability*. Our adoption of contemporary learning methods and tools will provide improved capability outcomes by encouraging greater learner engagement and more efficient and flexible learning delivery.

INTENTION FIVE

Focus Learning on Air Force Capability and Needs

17. The ultimate aim of learning in Air Force is to achieve effective capability outcomes through professional mastery. For this reason, the effectiveness of Air Force's learning systems in meeting its capability requirements must be continuously assessed. As Air Force will use a balance of internal and external learning programs to develop its members, externally provided education courses must be relevant to Air Force needs. That said, some modest extensions or changes to our learning requirements might be considered in order to gain an additional benefit such as civilian accreditation if this would not incur significant additional costs for Air Force.

CONCLUSION

18. Learning will underpin Air Force's transformation to a fifth generation force by providing our people with the professional mastery necessary to exploit the full potential of our advanced aircraft and systems in an increasingly complex and challenging operating environment. This requires us to develop and implement a coherent and contemporary approach to learning that is reflective of, and relevant to, the Information Age equipment that we will operate. Moreover, Air Force must secure broad commitment to this approach by taking concrete actions to promote a culture that genuinely values learning.

19. In short, Air Force will formally recognise that highly trained and educated people are as critical to the fifth generation force as the aircraft they fly and the systems they operate.

GN Davies, AO, CSC

Air Marshal
Chief of Air Force

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